

Tax plan for freeways, buses fails to make ballot

by **Glen Creno** - Aug. 11, 2008 12:45 PM

A \$42.6 billion plan to build new roadways and transit across **Arizona** has failed to qualify for the November ballot.

But the issue apparently isn't dead. Jeanine L'Ecuyer, spokeswoman for Gov. Janet Napolitano, said the Secretary of State's decision will be appealed in court. Napolitano has supported the measure.

"We're not accepting this as a final decision," she said.

L'Ecuyer said the number of invalid signatures does not show that the public doesn't back the plan. She said "the will of the people" is expressed by the thousands who signed the petitions and added that the governor hasn't backed off.

"Her support has not wavered," L'Ecuyer said. "This isn't done."

The state Secretary of State's Office disqualified Proposition 203, also called the TIME Act, for not having enough valid voter signatures to qualify for the ballot. The initiative needed 153,365 signatures .

A group calling itself the Transportation and

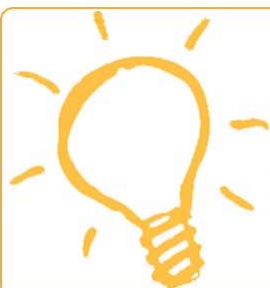
Infrastructure Moving AZ 's Economy, or TIME Coalition, submitted 260,698 signatures before the July 3 deadline. But 122, 247 were invalidated after a check by the Secretary of State's Office and county recorders. That left the measure more than 31,000 signatures short.

TIME representatives couldn't be reached this morning. It was unclear if the group would file a legal challenge to the verification.

TIME's plan would have increased the state sales tax by 1 cent for 30 years, beginning in 2010. Revenue would pay for such things as freeways, trains and buses. Critics said a tax increase wouldn't fly with voters during an economic downturn.

States all over the country had been looking for new ways to pay for transportation systems that have become increasingly expensive. Arizona's Department of Transportation has estimated that by 2015, transportation funding will decline to the point that much of the state will only be able to maintain and preserve existing roadways.

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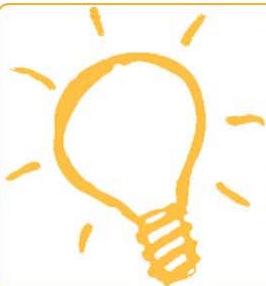
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